

University of Dayton eCommons

News Releases

Marketing and Communications

4-24-1990

How Much Influence Do Campaign Ads Have on Voter Behavior? Not Much--Unless They're Flashy, According to UD Study

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls

Recommended Citation

"How Much Influence Do Campaign Ads Have on Voter Behavior? Not Much--Unless They're Flashy, According to UD Study" (1990). *News Releases*. 6900.
https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls/6900

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Marketing and Communications at eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in News Releases by an authorized administrator of eCommons. For more information, please contact frice1@udayton.edu, mschlangen1@udayton.edu.

featuring UD

Story ideas for print and broadcast media

April 24, 1990

HOW MUCH INFLUENCE DO CAMPAIGN ADS HAVE ON VOTER BEHAVIOR? NOT MUCH--UNLESS THEY'RE FLASHY, ACCORDING TO UD STUDY

With the May 8 primary elections just around the corner, Ohio's gubernatorial candidates have already begun premiering their television campaign advertisements. Exactly how much influence do local politicians' campaign advertisements have on voters once they reach the polls?

According to Kathleen Watters, an assistant professor of communication at the University of Dayton, not much. Watters' graduate-level communication class surveyed voters in last fall's Dayton mayoral race and found that voters' decisions weren't based on the candidate's image or on campaign issues because voters "lacked the information to make those decisions." Why? The local candidates' political advertisements were "less flashy" and sophisticated than those of congressional and presidential candidates.

Only one in four voters in the mayoral election could recall an issue that influenced their vote, while 40 percent said that no issue influenced their decision, even after they were prompted with a list of 10 issues receiving the most local media attention.

"We are trying to determine why people vote the way they do in terms of mass media, interpersonal communication and personal influence, and predict the outcome from these elements," said Watters, who will have another graduate communication class survey voters in Ohio's gubernatorial race in November.

As part of the research, she and a colleague are gathering information from the University of Oklahoma's archives of presidential campaign advertisements. Political commercials from 1952 to 1988 will be cataloged, organized chronologically and grouped by different strategies and techniques politicians use to persuade voters.

"Politicians use visual as well as verbal techniques in persuasion," said Watters. "It's clear that the 30-second sound bite has replaced whistle-stop speeches in popularity."

For media interviews, contact Kathleen Watters at (513) 229-2378.



The University of Dayton

For further information or assistance in scheduling interviews, contact Office of Public Relations, (513) 229-3241.